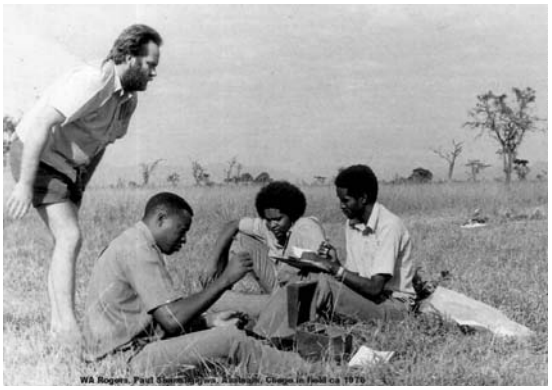
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EAST AFRICA LOSES A RARE AND UNIQUE INDIVIDUAL: ALAN RODGERS, AN APPRECIATION



East Africa and the world lost a unique individual when Dr. Alan Rodgers, teacher, conservationist and activist died of cancer on 31 March 2009. Alan was born in Liverpool, UK on 25 Oct 1944. His father, Bill Rodgers, was the first Professor of Economics at what is now the University of Nairobi, and Alan moved to Kenya at the age of seven. He completed a BSc at University of Nairobi in 1965 and his MSc at Aberdeen in 1966.

In 1966 Alan joined the Wildlife Division in Tanzania, and began his long and varied career as a biologist. Alan was fond of telling listeners that one of his first tasks with the Wildlife Division involved "working with local communities", in this case, removing illegal fishers from the waters of the Selous Game Reserve. As someone who moved towards community based conservation and an appreciation of local communities and indigenous knowledge later in his career, he said this with some irony.

Alan spent from 1966 to 1976 as a Senior Research Officer Wildlife Division, mostly based in the Selous Game Reserve. He was responsible for research and management policy. In addition to conducting research and month long foot surveys and anti poaching patrols. From 1971 he was Project Manager and responsible for the management of the Selous Game Reserve, a vast area of some 45 000 km^2. Alan set up and physically built the Miombo Research Centre at Kingupira in the Selous. From 1971-1976, he was also a government pilot for Ministry of Natural Resources & Tourism aircraft and he became an expert at conducting aerial surveys of wildlife. As if these duties were not sufficient to keep him occupied, Alan registered for a PhD programme at the University of Nairobi and conducted the research for this while based in the Selous Game Reserve.

Alan left the Wildlife Division in 1976 to take up a position as Senior Lecturer in the then Department of Zoology & Marine Biology at the University of Dar es Salaam. Alan helped develop and taught a new undergraduate Wildlife Ecology & Management major, an MSc programme in Wildlife, and stimulated staff and students to take up field research that addressed conservation and management issues. He obtained his PhD in 1987 with a thesis entitled "The Ecology of Grazing Herbivores in the Miombo Woodlands of South East Tanzania".

In 1984, Alan left the service of the University of Dar es Salaam for a position at Dehra Dun Wildlife College in India, where he was FAO Specialist in Wildlife Conservation Planning and Habitat Management and Chief Technical Adviser for the Project from 1988–1991.

Alan returned to East Africa from 1992–1996 as FAO / UNDP / GEF Project Chief Technical Adviser and set up the Global Environment Facility (GEF) project `Institutional Support for the Protection of East African Biodiversity'. This project allowed the training of postgraduate students in the East African Region, thus building capacity for biodiversity

studies, and also fostered contact among the region's environmentalists and biologists by funding regular regional meetings.

Few people are as dynamic and energetic as Alan, from 1996 thru 2003, he held two part time posts simultaneously. He was Regional Technical Advisor. FAO-UNDP-GEF, Regional Biodiversity Project in East Africa for the project 'Reducing Biodiversity Loss in Cross-Border Ecosystems' and simultaneously, served as Regional Coordinator for Biodiversity for UNDP's GEF Unit. From 2004 until his compulsory retirement in October 2006, Alan served as Regional Coordinator and Regional Technical Advisor for GEF–UNDP Projects in Biodiversity, International Waters and Land Degradation Focal Areas.After his retirement Alan worked with the World Agroforestry Centre, ICRAF, in Nairobi.

Alan was possessed of truly unique skills. He was a consummate wildlife field biologist who knew not only large mammal biology, but also taxonomic and field botany. Alan liked to raise issues, to ask difficult questions, both of scientists and politicians. He was a skilled lobbyist, yet was equally at home with politicians or amongst various local communities.

Alan raised awareness of the need to conserve forest habitats in East Africa, it was largely because of him that the Eastern Arc Mountain forests and the coastal forests of Kenya and Tanzania are recognized as global biodiversity hotspots.

Alan was well known for encouraging East Africans to get out into the field and conduct surveys, one of his favourite phrases was that there was a "need to document the resource". Not only did Alan lead by example, personally conducting many surveys in the Eastern Arc and Coastal Forests, but he also facilitated other specialists who perhaps were not as familiar with conducting fieldwork in remote places as he was. Thus, experts in butterflies, millipedes, mollusks, and plants, as well as primates and birds, all owe a debt to Alan, who encouraged and assisted them in many ways. Perhaps unknown to many EANHS members is Alan's interest in reptiles, he encouraged and assisted Dr. Jack Frazier to conduct marine turtle surveys in Tanzania and also constantly badgered me to produce a guide to the reptiles of the region that contained common as well as scientific names.

I knew Alan in Tanzania, and mainly as a scientist, but this complex, wonderful person was a man of many facets. Alan was comfortable in a variety of social situations and unlike many field biologists, could mix easily with government officials (having been one himself for many years perhaps assisted him in this). His powerful persuasive skills permitted him to place environmental matters squarely on the political agenda in East Africa, something which had not been done in the past.

To my mind, Alan was the quintessential East African, who knew Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, who was interested in the long term, not short term, sustainable approaches to conservation problems. His experience with government helped him to be able to see and to move towards institutional solutions and ways of addressing problems. Much of his success was due to the trust and mutual respect that he gave to and received from people in the East African Region.

Who among our EANHS membership today would feel comfortable in writing on both mammals and plants? Who can claim to have facilitated research on plants, indigenous knowledge, vernacular names, invertebrates, large and small mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles? Who amongst us has discovered a new species of primate, lobbied successfully for the creation of National Parks, a Nature Reserve—who also wrote the standard reference on Indian biodiversity that is now the most cited and used document in the field of wildlife conservation in India? Alan was comfortable carrying out intelligent conversation on topics as varied as the gum copal trade in East Africa, Maasai culture and conservation practices, and the vernacular names of forest trees. Anyone who thinks that Alan Rodgers was not a unique, wonderful, rare

person who will be greatly missed did not have the good fortune to interact with him. His legacy lives on in numerous forests and indeed, many habitats, now receiving better management than was the case before his activities and in the many East Africans, and indeed, others, who he encouraged to play an active role in biodiversity research, conservation and management.

Kim Howell
23 April 2009